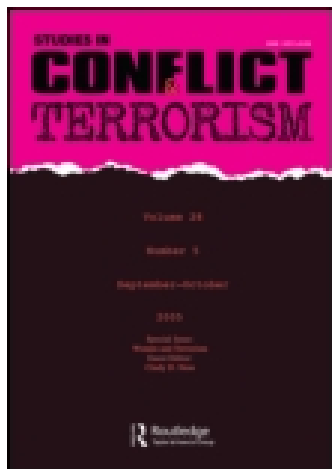


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Introduction

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Section I: Introduction

The numerous writings concerned with ‘urban guerrillas’ and modern ‘terrorists’ have focused on what they do, and—to some extent—on what makes them do it: which environments and personalities dispose to microviolence. Even the most sophisticated treatments, such as the recent analyses by J. Bowyer Bell and Walter Laqueur, do not systematically consider *what they thought they were doing, precisely what good it would do*.

To be sure, in some cases where microviolence occurs on behalf of a widely shared cause—usually an ethnic one, whether it be Basque, Palestinian, Irish—a large part of the answer is evident. But what about the Weathermen, the Japanese United Red Army, the Italian Brigade Rosse, the West German Rote Armee Fraktion and June 2 Movement?

Data on their calculations are meager, and those extant are not easily available. Hence the points below are a very first approximation, much in need of correction, amplification, further illustration.

Also, many of the points made below are as evident as they may be important. Yet focusing on each of them may increase the chance of going beyond the obvious.

I. Changing Mass Preferences

1. First of all, as has very often been noted, by heightening attention to the users of microviolence; to their message.

If a large part of the population, in the belief of many partisans of microviolence, *should* be hostile to the present shape of things but *isn't*, it is also because a barrier is interposed between the revolutionary message and the people. Acts of microviolence may be intended to break down that barrier; most obviously by coercing the Authorities to allow the revolutionaries themselves or their messages access to the media.

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It requires, the microviolent ones may point out, an extreme event to induce the media to break silence about them.

2. Convinced that the present order cruelly frustrates the interests of most and could gratify them only by the profound changes they favor, the microviolent ones are apt to take it for granted—in contrast, for instance, to revolutionaries in the Bolshevik tradition—that exposure to their ideas commands rigid conversion to them. The Authorities' high attention to us, they seem to believe, is accompanied by hostility and fear; surely, then, the people's interest in us goes with love and trust.

3. And also with gratitude in those cases where microviolence leads to benefits bestowed on some among the people. Microviolent ones may even aspire to instituting multiple reforms by permanent coercion.

4. Or the intention may be to arouse favorable sentiments by exercising vengeance and punishment against the people's enemies.

5. Again, microviolence may aim at obtaining documents or confessions compromising the established order.

6. If they are willing to go that far, the people may be expected to reason about those who commit microviolence that there must be much to their cause.

Look at the damage they are willing to *incur*.

And look at the damage the microviolent ones are willing to *inflict*: their targets must be bad indeed—so it may be hoped that the people will reason—to deserve such treatment.

7. Here violence is presumed to be sensed as bad in itself. But it may also be believed to be valued for its own sake by elements of the people, to be attracted to revolutionaries precisely because they both neither respect the law nor cherish the word.

8. Now that we have employed an extreme means, violence, on behalf of an extreme cause, we have even less than before the right—or even the possibility—to abandon that cause: in such fashion microviolence may be intended to commit.

9. The leader may then be the one who forbids himself violence least and thus liberates his comrades.

10. Beyond them, “we throw the bombs’ aimed at the apparatus of oppression also into the consciousness of the masses.”

11. Not only do “bombs” free one morally, they also suggest that the destruction of the present order is feasible; they raise a hope which permits desire for another life to unfold.

12. Microviolence, it may be predicted, will change beliefs about what the current relationship of *forces* between the Authorities and the revolutionaries is, and thereby affect the balance of *preferences* for and against the status quo.

13. Also by rendering middle roads less practicable: adherents of an extreme are apt to be confident that if people only have the choice between their and an opposed pole, they will largely make the right decision.

14. A "strategy of tension" may be accompanied by aspirations to reduce the established order's output of goods and services, always implying that the "system" rather than its saboteurs would be blamed.

15. It is implied that "the people," or at least a substantial fraction of it, is about as ready to sacrifice income to radical change as are the microviolent ones; and that many ordinary persons perceive a self-inflicted damage to current income to be as unavoidable a means for a better life later as it seems to the revolutionaries. These are no doubt estimates distant from realities; and characteristic, in precisely that distance, of many beliefs of microviolent ones about the people to which they want to be so close. In many respects, they seem to take it for granted that their actions will be understood as they are meant, while, to an observer, this may be far from certain.

16. With calculations such as the ones sketched above, one may buttress one's confidence that "we shall strike our enemy in order to win our people," confirm one's intuition that "the practical revolutionary example is the only path toward revolutionizing the masses:" Microviolence is as powerful as words are feeble.

More particularly, violence inspires imitation more than words induce acceptance.

17. It may be made even more attractive by applying high technology.

18. Thus one can resolve the anguishing question whether, in Marxist-Leninist language, the "subjective conditions" for microviolence are present here and now: "by beginning the armed struggle the awareness of its necessity will be furthered."

19. Any area is apt to be perceived by one disposed to small violence in the light in which his continent appeared to a Tupamaro: as "a Latin America with a vast explosive potential that had not as yet been touched off [and which] needed the presence of a . . . fuse to trigger the

explosion. . . . All that was necessary was to create the fuse. . . .” Then “a few dozen fighters . . . can unleash an avalanche. It is precisely our role . . . to provide this spark.” Mao, who has provided the image, has done it; so have Ho and Fidel; so have the Algerians—why not we?

II. Altering Beliefs about the Relationship of Forces

1. The very fact of microviolence appearing where there was none may for some time reduce the estimate of the Authority's power—and hence prospects—in all strata of the population. Thus microviolent ones may, to start with, set themselves the objective of proving to an often incredulous audience that microviolence is feasible: just that. As long as an act of microviolence had not often happened close by in time and space, as long as it had not yet ceased to evoke shocked surprise (delighted, horrified, curious), the astonishing quality of the event—Authority struck down or *coerced*—suggests a sharp change in relative power between the establishment and its enemies. There may then be a sense of a serious competitor to the existing order having suddenly emerged, awesome in his rapid rise from nothing; and vulnerable to return to nothingness if he can't continue delivering a high performance so as to live up to a suddenly acquired respect.

2. Also, a microviolent group, having committed a striking act, may be known to absorb, for some time at least, the attention and action of the Authorities' top level: surely, an organization producing this effect possesses high power.

3. The quality of the microviolence committed may be high, which suggests power.

4. Both the Authorities and the media tend to exaggerate the capabilities and the future acts of a microviolent group under the impact of a blow struck by it.

5. When microviolent ones—to mention one factor fostering exaggerated forecasts about their deeds—expose categories of persons who had not felt before that they were living under risk, to even a *small* probability of *high* damage, they may arouse high anxiety—which in turn may induce an excessive estimate of the chance that one will in fact be hurt.

6. Replacing unavailable quantity by suggestive quality, a microviolent group may engage in acts which one ordinarily expects only of

government. They then intend to make believe that there is "dual power"—rapidly and easily achieved and hence rendering the next jump to dominance plausible.

7. Finally—or rather in the first place—microviolence may aim at inducing Authority to treat with those who commit it as equals and at coercing Authority. The objective may be to inflict on Authority a *diminutive capitis* which will in turn change not only beliefs about the current relationship of forces in the Authority's disfavor, but also similarly affect forecasts about its final fate.

III. Destroying the Enemy through One Strike

As modern society appears more complex and fragile, modern weapons more impressive and their application to the centers of developed countries surprising—as these several trends join—microviolent ones may permit themselves the idea of bringing down the existing order by one blow, the counterpart of the all-out strike of some planners of nuclear war.

IV. Slowly Exhausting the Enemy through Attrition and Stress

"The mountain of the military potency of the bourgeois State," one may declare, alluding to a famous use of a Chinese legend by Mao, "must be leveled." It may, it is implied, take decades, but what does that matter? (A characteristic stress on "protracted" struggle which wards off the microviolents' impatience.) Look at Algeria, China, Vietnam.

1. But will, during such a protracted conflict, the enemy not be able to replace the resources of which he is being deprived?

No, for physical attrition will be accompanied by an even more important moral one which, it is implied, can be achieved with even less force.

The personnel of the State, accustomed to dish it out, will be permanently demoralized by now *having to take it*—never mind (it is implied) how much and how often; and that elusive attackers who "harass" the Authorities "work on their nerves through . . . small damages."

2. Damages which are also unexpected, whose ever present possibility induces unremitting *anxiety*. One of the "objectives" of the "urban guerrilla" is "to oblige the army and the police . . . to change the relative comfort and tranquility of their barracks and their usual rest for a

state of alarm and growing tension in the expectation of attack.” “The government,” too, will then be living with “ever present fears of an attack on its strategic nerve centers, without ever knowing where, how and when the attack will come.”

A very few attacks affecting but a minute fraction of the Authorities' personnel will, it is implied, suffice to arouse high and protracted anxiety in the establishment at large; whether its members are highly sensitive to even a small probability of high damage, or whether they exaggerate (also, driven by that sensitivity—see II) how much their enemy will presently proceed to do. One way or the other, it seems feasible to produce with sparse resources a state in which “nowhere will there be a pacified domain for officers and leading officials, a secure rear, a peaceful *Heimat*, a safe private life.”

3. In addition to anxiety, there is the effort and discomfort of the permanent *alert*, the defensive living which the microviolents expect to impose on the Authorities.

4. Finally, there is the *frustration* which elusive microviolent ones expect to impose on their targets, whom they show to be powerless as much as they prove them helpless.

5. The combined effect of these various torments will be “a gradual attrition of the enemy's forces, degradation of morale,” “the disorganization and demoralization of the oppressor's armed forces by a lengthy extenuating small war.”

V. Practicing for the Final Battle

Agreeing with revolutionaries in the Bolshevik tradition that the “seizure of power” will require “armed struggle,”—“in the ultimate conflict between the classes only guns count”—the microviolent ones may affirm that this final encounter calls for protracted practice which should begin “here and now.”

Thus the microviolent ones seem to apply to fighting the contemporary disposition to believe that so many acts which were earlier regarded as capabilities available to human beings without previous practice, do in fact require just that. So much has to be learned, and one learns only by doing; which is also the sole means to reduce inhibitions.

VI. Setting Enemies to Fight among Themselves

Acts of microviolence, their proponents point out, are apt to become

major occasions for conflict within the ruling group: its various factions, rather than closing ranks, may quarrel about what allowed such acts to occur, how they were handled, and how they *should* be: all of which may be both genuine issues and pretexts in struggles for power.

VII. Diverting Resources of the Enemy from a More Important Front

Even though it may be recognized that the enemy won't have to reallocate his resources noticeably as a consequence of one's microattack on him, one may feel a moral obligation to help "Vietnam"—if one is occurring—in this fashion to the maximum of one's capacity, be it little above zero.

VIII. Showing How Bad the Enemy Is

A "basic principle of revolutionary strategy" is "to release such a volume of revolutionary action that the enemy will be obliged to transform the political situation into a military one"; for "then dissatisfaction will reach all the strata of society." Prior to the provoking microviolence, the badness of the present order may have been fully visible only to the trained or passionate eye of a few; the reactions of the Authorities which that violence is intended to induce will render their evil nature obvious to the many.

1. So sure are revolutionaries inclined to microviolence of such a reaction that they are apt to neglect the persisting disposition of men in power to *instigate* small violence against themselves, so as to benefit from revulsion against it as well as from the repression with which they intend to respond to it.

2. In contrast, those tending toward microviolence may be convinced that much of the people will be unhappy with the government's response to microviolence, and blame the Authorities instead of the rebels for it; rather than, for instance, condoning or even welcoming restrictions on everyone's liberties in response to violence; or at least blaming the violent ones for having unleashed their enemies.

3. Also, the microviolent ones may not consider whether the benefit to them from a popular revulsion against the extreme response they will have provoked might not be smaller than the loss to them from the repression included in that response. In several and well-known recent cases that loss has approached or reached annihilation.

4. Finally, it might be overlooked that the Authorities may limit

themselves to repression directed against the microviolent ones without touching the rest of the population much, and that this repression might be effective, while not harsher (perhaps indeed less severe) than what "public opinion" demands. In contrast, the microviolent ones often take it for granted that they and the public at large cannot be separated as targets. When "the government," conforming to the intent of its enemies, "has no alternative except to intensify repression," then "the police networks, house searches, arrests of innocent people and of suspects, closing off streets make life in the city unbearable."

5. Those given to violence seem indeed apt to exaggerate in various ways the bonds between them and the population.

6. This is presumably what permits them to orient so much of their operations on their own concerns—most prominently, the liberation of prisoners—rather than responding to aspirations outside of themselves. It is rare to find a group such as the "Trotskyite" ERP in Argentina which for a time concentrated on kidnapping business executives so as to coerce their companies to distribute food and clothing to the poor as well as exercise books and pencils to their children, to rehire discharged workers, and to improve the conditions of those employed.

A considerable fraction of the targets consists of persons who have damaged other microviolent ones.

The names of microviolent groups may refer to incidents in their war with the Authorities, and hence be unintelligible to almost all.

IX. Coercion to Reduce the Enemy's Resources and the Efficiency of Their Use

Attributing to themselves a capacity for unleashing the enemy to their own advantage (VIII), the microviolent ones may also believe they know how to leash him.

1. First, through reprisals so as to deter their principal enemies from actions against them.

2. Second, those disposed to microviolence may direct their attention to the large number of persons who each of them makes a small contribution to the enemy's strength (the total being considerable) and who are loath to accept even a *low* chance of *high* damage from their activities. But microviolence may produce just such a chance; and thereby significantly (in the expectation of "terrorists") reduce both the

amount of resources at the enemy's disposal and the efficiency with which they will henceforth be used. The microviolent ones may foresee that the persons thus exposed to novel risks will not, even with time, come to accept them; and/or that the operation for which the risks are created will be completed before the targets get accustomed to them.

Burdening the activities of the Authorities' civilian and military personnel with fear is to suggest a negative answer to the question: "Where can the State find the tens of thousands of heroes ready to fight under such anxiety?"

Resignations may then prevail over entries: "those who see a cushy job in being a policeman or a soldier will increasingly understand the risk which this profession entails under the changed circumstances."

Short of abandoning their posts, the servants of the State may prudently curtail their performance.

Section II: Comments

Comments on Jillian Becker

B1)b. The decision on "giving in" may be appropriately affected by the government's estimate of its capacity to reduce the terrorists' capacity. To mention an obvious example, in the late nineteen-sixties the Brazilian government "gave in" presumably in connection with its correct forecast that it would within a limited time destroy the terrorists' capacity. (Whether it was morally justifiable to achieve this in the way then and there adopted is another question.)

Also, the cost-benefit assessment of "giving in" may differ according to whether the government gives in to giving in, in conflict and torment, or whether it applies a settled policy of giving in (as again in the Brazilian case). If the events concerning Aldo Moro were repeated with regard to whoever has taken his place as a Christian-Democratic candidate for the Presidency, "it would" perhaps not already at that moment "become plain that the method simply does not work": if I resist a first and a second and even a third bout of torture, my tormentors may still predict that, everybody having a limit to his endurance, I will give in at the fourth. Surely the appearance of candidatures for the December election would be more affected than it is now (June) (written before Leone's resignation).

B2)b. In contrast to, for instance, drug pushers, terrorists assume a substantial risk of dying when killing or ready to kill. Probably for some of them this is an attractive aspect of their acts: consciously, it renders killing more justifiable (See Camus's *Les justes*); obscurely, it satisfies aspirations to being damaged, so as to extinguish (other) guilt, or for one of several other motives.

The suicides of Meins, Meinhof, Ensslin, Baader, and Raspe may indicate a substantial presence of noncompleted urges toward suicide among at least the current German terrorists.

In view of all this, and the obvious disposition of terrorists to perceive and present execution as martyrdom, the death penalty may be an incentive rather than an obstacle.

Making terrorists sentenced to death into hostages of the second order—hostages for the case of terrorist hostage-taking—would be becoming similar to the terrorists in one respect: taking hostages.

4)b. I might find it awkward to make such a declaration, as the opposite announcement would be less admirable.

Comments on J. Bowyer Bell

(1) If words are used in ordinary ways, Germany (1) is an efficient democratic state without a nationality problem; (2) has a problem in terrorism.

(3) What is the evidence for what seems to be implied: that if war between Germany and France seemed nonexcluded, as say in 1928, the level of terrorism in these countries would be lower?

If there is a positive relationship between prosperity and terrorism, the latter should have suffered since 1973.

(4) The "new" terrorism may indeed be new when, for instance, it attracts a good part of the governmental top level's energy for weeks while it threatens to execute a hostage; when it occasions an intense conflict within the establishment as to how to deal with it and thus leads to major changes in political alignments and practices (Uruguay).

Comments of Iring Fetscher

(1) The "opposition against a way of life which does not seem to know any . . . 'aim' beyond the increase of material wealth": in contrast, a large fraction of the terrorists with whom the Conference is concerned

focus on the material misery existing in advanced countries, usually exaggerating its incidence.

(4) "One does not kill human beings, but representatives . . . of the 'system'." This, it seems to me, is the position of earlier terrorists from which many current ones are departing: the *Bulle* is entirely evil, there is no regret about having to kill a possibly nice human being together with the "system's" "character mask."

" . . . the oppressed . . . are not . . . asked whether they wish to be 'helped' . . .": for "the system" prevents most of those it exploits/oppresses from minding—which, on the other hand, violence may make them do.

Comments on Risto Fried

II.A. "[In West Germany, the incidence of terrorism is apt to be reduced by] progress toward a democratic, peaceful society." To consider this hypothesis, it may be necessary to conjecture which particular developments would be taken to be such progress by the terrorists/their milieu.

II.B. ". . . the immediate reporting" of terrorist acts. A "code" for the media might include the moral obligation to delay reporting—which would presumably reduce public interest in such reports.

Comments on Martin G. Silverstein

5. The increase in crime rates in advanced countries in recent decades has rendered the "belief of its citizens that they will be protected from bodily harm" less "secure." Yet this has not interfered with "the continuous existence of . . . governments," "the . . . fiber of . . . [the] state."

Comments on Joachim Wagner

Origin of terrorism, (1): The amount of "uncertainty and dispute about the legitimacy of violence as a political instrument," *outside* of the highly circumscribed sector which sympathizes with the terrorists, seems to me near zero in several countries where the incidence of terrorism in the seventies has been high.

(2) The typical sequence, in these cases, does not seem to go from disappointed aspirations for a set of specific reforms, in the usual sense

of the word, to terrorism; but rather from a disappointed striving for Revolution to be initiated by means other than microviolence to Revolution to be thus occasioned.

(3) Which periods in the modern West are different from those named in the respect described?

(4) If "political idealist" is taken in the usual sense, the statement here made seems false. If that word is suitably restricted, the statement becomes tautological.

(5) As for (4).

Reaction to terrorism (4): What is the meaning of "terrorist" in this sentence?

(5): As for (4).

Comments to Jacob Sundberg

p. 2, last §: "The new mysticism." In the sense characterized by the author, terrorists participate in a vast trend of the later twentieth century, less conspicuously illustrated by the computer specialist who goes to Zen class at night. Among the obvious facilitating factors are:

—the revolutionary enterprises accenting high rationality ("Marxism is scientific socialism") have had disappointing results;

—the probably decreasing tolerance for displeasure has disposed people to accept the rule of "if it feels good [it must be good and hence] do it";

—the probably increasing aversion towards death has indisposed towards viewing one's life now as a rational means for a remote end;

—the probably increasing dread of not feeling anything has attracted towards strong stimuli such as violence to make oneself feel alive;

—the probably decreased attachment to ideas has disposed to an acceptance of *l'atto precede la norma* (Giovanni Gentile, a fascist);

—and, of course, there is the increased public acceptability both of enjoyed violence as well as of violence-as-a-job (*The Godfather*).

Of course, such factors could be elaborated and multiplied. I recall them only to evoke the obvious, that the normal climate of the West is less discrepant with the subjects of this conference than it was at the time of anarchist violence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.